

report provides us an opportunity to keep a careful eye on Ecuador and its compliance with the eligibility criteria. But just as important is the fact that the reporting requirement is enormously important as a signal to Ecuador—a message that this Congress is watching Ecuador closely.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CAMP. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I thank the gentleman from Michigan.

In addition, I am disappointed that today's bill doesn't do more to establish certainty for users of the program here and abroad through an extension that is longer than a mere year. I and Mr. CAMP have been seeking a 2-year extension.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill because I don't want the remaining preferences to lapse, but we can and should do better.

Mr. LEVIN. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I urge my colleagues to support the Andean Trade Preference Extension Act of 2009, which will extend the Andean trade preferences, as we know as ATPA, and also the Generalized System of Preferences, we also refer to as GSP, for an additional year. However, I do think it's important to note my disappointment that we did not put a message specifically putting Ecuador on notice that its behavior and its receipt of continued benefits is at serious risk. There is a deteriorating investment climate in Ecuador as well as their repudiation of the bilateral investment treaty. I think it's very important that while it is understood in this legislation that there is language maintaining a review, I am concerned that there is not specific language aimed at challenging Ecuador's actions. I do think this is a change from current law and it's a step backward. I think it's important to send a strong message that any central tenet of a preference program is that the participants uphold their commitments to the rule of law as well as their commitments to the U.S. on investment and other matters.

So as a result of this, I believe preference programs should not be viewed as an entitlement; that they are based upon meeting certain criteria as I mentioned, particularly, as others have said, the observance of labor and environmental laws, certainly actions to prevent the distortion of investment as well as the support and enforcement of intellectual property laws as well as reasonable access to markets.

However, I do think despite these concerns, this legislation is extremely important. It is essential that we extend this for another year. I think that this is an important step to take, and I will support its passage. I look forward to working with the administration as well as my colleagues on the

Ways and Means Committee, Chairman RANGEL and Chairman LEVIN, as we continue to address trade issues in the coming year.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4284, which would extend the Andean Trade Preferences Act, ATPA, and the Generalized System of Preferences, GSP, for an additional year. I would like to thank Chairman RANGEL for his leadership on this issue and for bringing this bill to the floor. It is critically important that we extend these trade preferences before they expire at the end of this calendar year. We have seen in the past the damage that a short lapse can do to cross border business relationships.

The trade preferences we seek to extend benefit both the United States and our South American trading partners. These preferences support economic growth both here in the United States and abroad in some of the poorest countries in the world. Almost 2 million jobs in the United States and the Andean region depend on ATPA preferences and the region has emerged an important market for U.S. exports. Because use of the programs is conditioned through eligibility criteria, such as labor, human rights, and intellectual property, the United States is able to advance both important economic and foreign policy goals.

I therefore urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 4284.

Ms. LINDA T. SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4284, the Andean Trade Preference Extension Act of 2009 (ATPA), which would extend both the General System of Preferences (GSP) and the Andean Trade Preferences for one year.

It is important to extend these preference programs, which assist developing countries in their efforts to build up domestic industries, increase exports, and alleviate poverty. In some cases, these programs have worked well. South Korea, Singapore, and other nations have graduated from the GSP program, and no longer qualify for these special trade benefits.

Failure to extend these preferences would put even more pressure on impoverished populations in developing nations.

Make no mistake, my support for this extension is not an unqualified endorsement of their current structure. To be sure, our preferences programs need improvement.

One key improvement that is desperately needed is to change the prevailing view that trade preferences are a development strategy. Instead, we must recognize that trade preferences are only part of a comprehensive development strategy, which must also include investments in education, training, and infrastructure, as well as a consideration of targeted debt relief.

In addition, our preferences programs currently have inadequately-enforced labor standards and no environmental standards whatsoever.

The rationale for linking trade and labor rights is vital to avoiding a "race to the bottom." For American working families, we need to ensure that developing countries attract investment based on a competitive wage advantage, not by artificially suppressing wages through labor repression. For working families in developing countries, the opportunity to bargain collectively for better wages and working conditions will ensure that some of the bene-

fits of trade go to them, not just to multinational corporations.

This one-year extension will give us the time we need to reform existing programs without disrupting the fragile economies of the lesser-developed nations that our preferences programs are designed to help.

Finally, I want to address the issue of Ecuador in particular. Unfortunately, it has come to my attention that Chevron Corporation has been urging Members of Congress and the Administration to punish Ecuador because its government refuses to intervene in a private lawsuit against the oil giant. The plaintiffs in the lawsuit contend that the company is responsible for polluting a vast area of the Amazon Basin, causing serious health and environmental consequences.

While I take no position on the lawsuit, I do believe that the plaintiffs should have their day in court. I also believe that, of all the legitimate reasons to oppose the U.S. trade preferences programs, doing the bidding of a single corporation is not one of them.

As the editors of the Los Angeles Times wrote in a recent editorial, "There are other factors for Congress to consider in determining whether to extend Ecuador's trade preferences: workers' rights and trade and investment policy also are important. And there are issues that remain to be negotiated between the two countries. But in each of these areas, Ecuador has demonstrated a willingness to work with the U.S. That should be the test for an extension of trade benefits, not the private interests of one corporation."

To reiterate, while our trade preferences programs are not perfect, extending them for one year is vital, and I strongly support this legislation.

Mr. CAMP. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. I urge passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4284.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2009

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 303) to reauthorize and improve the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
 Sec. 2. Reauthorization.
 Sec. 3. Website relating to Federal grants.
 Sec. 4. Report on implementation.
 Sec. 5. Strategic plan.
 Sec. 6. Data standard requirements.
SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION.

Section 11 of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is amended—

(1) in the section heading, by striking “and sunset”; and

(2) by striking “and shall cease to be effective 8 years after such date of enactment”.

SEC. 3. WEBSITE RELATING TO FEDERAL GRANTS.

Section 6 of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (e) and (f) as subsections (g) and (h), respectively;

(2) by inserting after subsection (d) the following new subsections:

“(e) WEBSITE RELATING TO FEDERAL GRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall establish and maintain a public website that serves as a central point of information and access for applicants for Federal grants.

“(2) CONTENTS.—To the maximum extent possible, the website established under this subsection shall include, at a minimum, for each Federal grant—

“(A) the grant announcement;

“(B) the statement of eligibility relating to the grant;

“(C) the application requirements for the grant;

“(D) the purposes of the grant;

“(E) the Federal agency funding the grant;

“(F) the deadlines for applying for and awarding of the grant.

“(G) all applications received for the grant, set forth in the single data standard adopted under section 9(b); and

“(H) all reports relating to the use of the grant, set forth in the single data standard adopted under section 9(b).

“(3) USE BY APPLICANTS.—The website established under this subsection shall, to the greatest extent practicable, allow grant applicants to—

“(A) use the website with any computer platform;

“(B) search the website for all Federal grants by type, purpose, funding agency, program source, and other relevant criteria;

“(C) apply for a Federal grant using the website;

“(D) manage, track, and report on the use of Federal grants using the website; and

“(E) provide all required certifications and assurances for a Federal grant using the website.

“(4) USE BY THE PUBLIC.—The website established under this subsection shall, to the greatest extent practicable, allow members of the public to—

“(A) view the items described in paragraph (2);

“(B) navigate easily among and between the items described in paragraph (2) and other supporting materials;

“(C) download grant applications and reports, in the single data standard adopted under section 9, individually or as a single data set; and

“(D) access individual grant applications and reports at web addresses that are distinct, permanent, unique, and searchable.

“(f) PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring the publication of information otherwise exempt under section 552 of title 5, United States Code (popularly referred to as the ‘Freedom of Information Act’).”; and

(3) in subsection (h), as so redesignated, by striking “All actions” and inserting “Except

for actions relating to establishing the website required under subsection (e), all actions”.

SEC. 4. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.

The Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is amended by striking section 7 and inserting the following:

“SEC. 7. EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 9 months after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, and every 2 years thereafter until the date that is 15 years after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the Director shall submit to Congress a report regarding the implementation of this Act.

“(b) CONTENTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Each report under subsection (a) shall include, for the applicable period—

“(A) a list of all grants for which an applicant may submit an application using the website established under section 6(e);

“(B) a list of all Federal agencies that provide Federal financial assistance to non-Federal entities;

“(C) a list of each Federal agency that has complied, in whole or in part, with the requirements of this Act;

“(D) for each Federal agency listed under subparagraph (C), a description of the extent of the compliance with this Act by the Federal agency;

“(E) a list of all Federal agencies exempted under section 6(d);

“(F) for each Federal agency listed under subparagraph (E)—

“(i) an explanation of why the Federal agency was exempted; and

“(ii) a certification that the basis for the exemption of the Federal agency is still applicable;

“(G) a list of all common application forms that have been developed that allow non-Federal entities to apply, in whole or in part, for multiple Federal financial assistance programs (including Federal financial assistance programs administered by different Federal agencies) through a single common application;

“(H) a list of all common forms and requirements that have been developed that allow non-Federal entities to report, in whole or in part, on the use of funding from multiple Federal financial assistance programs (including Federal financial assistance programs administered by different Federal agencies);

“(I) a description of the efforts made by the Director and Federal agencies to communicate and collaborate with representatives of non-Federal entities during the implementation of the requirements under this Act;

“(J) a description of the efforts made by the Director to work with Federal agencies to meet the goals of this Act, including a description of working groups or other structures used to coordinate Federal efforts to meet the goals of this Act; and

“(K) identification and description of all systems being used to disburse Federal financial assistance to non-Federal entities.

“(2) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—The second report submitted under subsection (a), and each subsequent report submitted under subsection (a), shall include—

“(A) a discussion of the progress made by the Federal Government in meeting the goals of this Act, including the amendments made by the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, and in implementing the strategic plan submitted under section 8, including an evaluation of the progress of each Federal agency

that has not received an exemption under section 6(d) towards implementing the strategic plan; and

“(B) a compilation of the reports submitted under section 8(c)(3) during the applicable period.

“(c) DEFINITION OF APPLICABLE PERIOD.—In this section, the term ‘applicable period’ means—

“(1) for the first report submitted under subsection (a), the most recent full fiscal year before the date of the report; and

“(2) for the second report submitted under subsection (a), and each subsequent report submitted under subsection (a), the period beginning on the date on which the most recent report under subsection (a) was submitted and ending on the date of the report.”.

SEC. 5. STRATEGIC PLAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is further amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 8, 9, 10, and 11 as sections 9, 10, 11, and 12, respectively; and

(2) by inserting after section 7, as amended by this Act, the following new section:

“SEC. 8. STRATEGIC PLAN.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the Director shall submit to Congress a strategic plan that—

“(1) identifies Federal financial assistance programs that are suitable for common applications based on the common or similar purposes of the Federal financial assistance;

“(2) identifies Federal financial assistance programs that are suitable for common reporting forms or requirements based on the common or similar purposes of the Federal financial assistance;

“(3) identifies common aspects of multiple Federal financial assistance programs that are suitable for common application or reporting forms or requirements;

“(4) identifies changes in law, if any, needed to achieve the goals of this Act; and

“(5) provides plans, timelines, and cost estimates for—

“(A) developing an entirely electronic, web-based process for managing Federal financial assistance, including the ability to—

“(i) apply for Federal financial assistance;

“(ii) track the status of applications for and payments of Federal financial assistance;

“(iii) report on the use of Federal financial assistance, including how such use has been in furtherance of the objectives or purposes of the Federal financial assistance; and

“(iv) provide required certifications and assurances;

“(B) ensuring full compliance by Federal agencies with the requirements of this Act, including the amendments made by the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009;

“(C) creating common applications for the Federal financial assistance programs identified under paragraph (1), regardless of whether the Federal financial assistance programs are administered by different Federal agencies;

“(D) establishing common financial and performance reporting forms and requirements for the Federal financial assistance programs identified under paragraph (2), regardless of whether the Federal financial assistance programs are administered by different Federal agencies;

“(E) establishing common applications and financial and performance reporting forms and requirements for aspects of the Federal financial assistance programs identified

under paragraph (3), regardless of whether the Federal financial assistance programs are administered by different Federal agencies;

“(F) developing mechanisms to ensure compatibility between Federal financial assistance administration systems and State systems to facilitate the importing and exporting of data;

“(G) developing common certifications and assurances, as appropriate, for all Federal financial assistance programs that have common or similar purposes, regardless of whether the Federal financial assistance programs are administered by different Federal agencies;

“(H) minimizing the number of different systems used to disburse Federal financial assistance; and

“(I) applying the single data standard adopted under section 9 to Federal grants and grant applications.

“(b) CONSULTATION.—In developing and implementing the strategic plan under subsection (a), the Director shall consult with representatives of non-Federal entities and Federal agencies that have not received an exemption under section 6(d).

“(c) FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date on which the Director submits the strategic plan under subsection (a), the head of each Federal agency that has not received an exemption under section 6(d) shall develop a plan that describes how the Federal agency will carry out the responsibilities of the Federal agency under the strategic plan, which shall include—

“(A) clear performance objectives and timelines for action by the Federal agency in furtherance of the strategic plan; and

“(B) the identification of measures to improve communication and collaboration with representatives of non-Federal entities on an on-going basis during the implementation of this Act.

“(2) CONSULTATION.—The head of each Federal agency that has not received an exemption under section 6(d) shall consult with representatives of non-Federal entities during the development and implementation of the plan of the Federal agency developed under paragraph (1).

“(3) REPORTING.—Not later than 2 years after the date on which the head of a Federal agency that has not received an exemption under section 6(d) develops the plan under paragraph (1), and every 2 years thereafter until the date that is 15 years after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the head of the Federal agency shall submit to the Director a report regarding the progress of the Federal agency in achieving the objectives of the plan of the Federal agency developed under paragraph (1).”

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 5(d) of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is amended by inserting “, until the date on which the Federal agency submits the first report by the Federal agency required under section 8(c)(3)” after “subsection (a)(7)”.

SEC. 6. DATA STANDARD REQUIREMENTS.

(a) DATA STANDARD REQUIREMENTS.—The Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is further amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 9, 10, 11, and 12 as sections 10, 11, 12, and 13, respectively; and

(2) by inserting after section 8, as added by this Act, the following new section:

“SEC. 9. DATA STANDARD REQUIREMENTS.

“(a) DATA STANDARD REQUIREMENTS.—

“(1) REQUIREMENT.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall adopt a

single data standard for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of business and financial information for use by private sector entities in accordance with subsection (b) for information required to be reported to the Federal Government, and a single data standard for use by agencies within the Federal Government in accordance with subsection (c) for Federal financial information.

“(2) CHARACTERISTICS OF DATA STANDARDS.—The single data standards required by paragraph (1) shall—

“(A) be common across all agencies, to the maximum extent practicable;

“(B) be a widely accepted, non-proprietary, searchable, computer-readable format for business and financial data;

“(C) be consistent with and implement—

“(i) United States generally accepted accounting principles or Federal financial accounting standards (as appropriate);

“(ii) industry best practices; and

“(iii) Federal regulatory requirements;

“(D) improve the transparency, consistency, and usability of business and financial information; and

“(E) be capable of being continually upgraded to be of maximum use as technologies and content evolve over time.

“(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF SINGLE DATA STANDARD FOR PRIVATE SECTOR.—

“(1) OMB GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall issue guidance to agencies on the use and implementation of the single data standard required by subsection (a) for information required to be reported to agencies by the private sector.

“(2) AGENCY REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) REQUIREMENT.—To the maximum extent practicable and consistent with the guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget under paragraph (1), the head of each agency shall require the use of the single data standard required by subsection (a) for business and financial information reported to the agency by private sector companies.

“(B) IMPLEMENTATION.—The head of the agency shall begin implementing the requirement of subparagraph (A) within one year after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009.

“(c) IMPLEMENTATION OF SINGLE DATA STANDARD FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.—

“(1) OMB DEVELOPMENT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall develop the single data standard required by subsection (a) for use by agencies within the Federal Government for Federal financial information.

“(2) OMB GUIDANCE.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the Director shall issue guidance to agencies on the use and implementation of the single data standard developed under paragraph (1).

“(d) PUBLIC ACCESS TO DATA.—The head of each agency shall ensure that information collected using the single data standards required under this section is accessible to the general public in that format to the extent permitted by law.

“(e) REPORT.—Within one year after the date of the enactment of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and

the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the status of the implementation of this section.

“(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) AGENCY.—The term ‘agency’ means any executive department, military department, Government corporation, Government controlled corporation, independent establishment, or other establishment in the executive branch of the Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agency, but does not include—

“(A) the Government Accountability Office;

“(B) the Federal Election Commission;

“(C) the governments of the District of Columbia and of the territories and possessions of the United States, and their various subdivisions; or

“(D) Government-owned contractor-operated facilities, including laboratories engaged in national defense research and production activities.

“(2) EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, MILITARY DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT CORPORATION, GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED CORPORATION, INDEPENDENT ESTABLISHMENT.—The terms ‘Executive department’, ‘military department’, ‘Government corporation’, ‘Government controlled corporation’, and ‘independent establishment’ have the meanings given those terms by chapter 1 of title 5, United States Code.

“(3) INDEPENDENT REGULATORY AGENCY.—The term ‘independent regulatory agency’ has the meaning given that term by section 3502(5) of title 44, United States Code.”

(b) REQUIREMENT FOR USE OF SINGLE DATA STANDARD BY FEDERAL AGENCIES.—Section 5 of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e) SINGLE DATA STANDARD REQUIREMENT.—To the maximum extent practicable and consistent with the guidance provided by the Director under section 9, each Federal agency shall require the use of the single data standard adopted under section 9(b) for—

“(1) all applications for Federal financial assistance; and

“(2) all reports on the use of Federal financial assistance that the agency requires non-Federal entities to submit.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to add any extraneous materials.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Chairman ED TOWNS, I am proud to present S. 303, the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 2009, for consideration.

□ 1645

Senate 303 was introduced by Senator GEORGE VOINOVICH of Ohio on January 22, 2009, and passed by the United States Senate on March 17, 2009, by unanimous consent. The legislation was subsequently referred to the House Oversight Committee on March 18, 2009, and approved with a manager's amendment on December 10, 2009, by voice vote.

Madam Speaker, the legislation will reauthorize and enhance the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999. Specifically, Senate 303 reauthorizes and makes significant enhancements to the Web site, www.grants.gov, which serves as a central location for grant applicants to search and apply for Federal grants, as well as to submit the necessary financial reports. The Web site is a one-stop-shop for grant recipients, alleviating much of the paperwork burden that has traditionally been associated with the grant application process and allowing recipients to focus their attention on serving the American public.

In addition to reauthorizing the grants.gov Web site, Senate 303 directs the Office of Management and Budget to improve the administration of Federal grants and submit corresponding reports to Congress on its progress towards this end.

I'd also like to note that the gentleman from California, Representative DARRELL ISSA, and the ranking member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform joined Chairman TOWNS in offering a manager's amendment to this legislation during our committee business meeting last week.

The amendment makes a number of important technical changes to the bill. Specifically, it incorporates the provisions of H.R. 2392, the Government Information Transparency Act, legislation directing the Office of Management and Budget to adopt a single data standard for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of business and financial information. The standard must be common across all Federal agencies and make the data widely available to the public.

This standard will also be applied to the data on Federal grants, making it easier to evaluate the use of grant funds. This will make Federal financial information much more accessible to the public, thereby improving the transparency of this data and allowing the public to analyze it more easily. It will also improve the availability and interoperability of financial data reported to the government by the private sector, addressing concerns that the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform raised in their hearings earlier this year.

Madam Speaker, Senate 303 will help strengthen a great resource for Federal grant recipients as well as improve the public's access to important financial data.

I'd like to close my statement by thanking Chairman ED TOWNS, the gen-

tleman from Brooklyn, New York, and Ranking Member DARRELL ISSA, the gentleman from California, for their work on this measure, and I urge my colleagues to join both of those gentlemen in supporting S. 303.

And I reserve the balance of our time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill will bring some much-needed transparency to the Federal Government. Senate 303 reauthorizes and improves the Federal Financial Assistance Management Act of 1999, which sought to simplify the application and reporting requirements for Federal grants. It requires the OMB and Federal agencies to develop a strategic plan for streamlining Federal grant processes, and it codifies grants.gov, the Federal Government's one-stop-shop for grant announcements and applications submission.

S. 303's new requirements are driven by a GAO assessment reporting that OMB and Federal agencies have made modest progress towards standardizing grant announcements and applications. The government has developed a standard format for grant announcements, began consolidating grant management systems, and set up a Web site, grants.gov. However, it, so far, has failed to develop a common system for a full-scale application, management, and reporting for financial assistance.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate Chairman TOWNS' willingness to work with us to incorporate language from H.R. 2392, the Government Information Transparency Act, which was introduced by Ranking Member ISSA. The provisions that were incorporated from the ranking member's bill will enhance the collection, analysis, and dissemination of business and financial information by the Federal Government through the use of a single data standard. Currently, the Federal Government mandates disclosure of large amounts of information in a multitude of ways. Financial reports in a uniform format will be more transparent and more easily analyzed and critiqued by the public, the media, and the oversight community.

In addition, S. 303 will require grant applications and reports to be made public and prepared according to a single, consistent data standard. For the first time, watchdog groups, journalists, and ordinary citizens will be able to see for themselves the promises and projections that grant applicants make in order to receive taxpayer dollars and then hold them directly accountable. A watchdog group publicizing waste or abuse of taxpayer money could put up a blog post linking directly to applications and reports describing how the money has been appropriated and spent.

A citizen or a news reporter searching for the name of a company might discover that the company had received taxpayer money to complete a

local infrastructure project and be able to hold the company directly accountable for the use of public funds. Information about the amount of money requested, the amount of money spent, and progress on taxpayer-funded projects could be computed automatically and easily. Taxpayers could determine how much grant money had been awarded to a local business or nonprofit, and automatically compare the performance of different grant recipients and recognize disparities in grant funding between States or congressional districts.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Chairman TOWNS and his staff for working with the Republicans on this important legislation by incorporating bipartisan language to increase transparency in the Federal Government. I also want to commend Senator VOINOVICH for his hard work on this bill, and I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

We have no further speakers, and I would yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, earlier this year, I introduced H.R. 2392, the "Government Information Transparency Act," to make federal reporting of taxpayer dollars more accessible to the American people. In Committee, Chairman EDOLPHUS TOWNS and I were able to work on a bipartisan basis to get key provisions of this legislation into S. 303, which is now under consideration by the House.

The Government Information Transparency Act instructs the Office of Management and Budget to designate a single data standard for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of business and financial information required to be reported to the federal government.

The federal government mandates disclosure of large amounts of information: financial filings by public companies, call reports by financial institutions, various disclosures by federal contractors, reports by recipients of taxpayer-funded grant money, and the list goes on. Too often, these disclosures are in formats that don't permit electronic searches and comparisons. Some disclosures, in fact, are still made using paper. Moreover, the formats vary from agency to agency, and even within agencies. Unwieldy and incompatible data formats make reported information much less useful than it could be. Even worse, it creates complex and overlapping layers of reporting that serve as the breeding ground for wasteful government.

Information reported to the federal government needs to become both fully searchable and fully standardized. Modern information technology can bridge these two gaps. An interactive data standard that relies on electronic tags to individually identify each element of information can render every piece of data separately readable by software. This interactivity allows the creation of databases that are far more useful than sequential, plain-text financial reports. And if the same standard were applied to every federal agency's disclosure programs—securities, banking, grants, contracts, and so on—unprecedented searches and comparisons would become possible.

So, the Government Information Transparency Act requires the OMB to set up a single interactive data standard for reported information—a standardized, universal, and machine-readable format that will be made available to the general public. The use of a single data standard will still allow agencies to be flexible in how they require information to be submitted. Sophisticated companies might be asked to submit large data files; small companies and nonprofits could fill in Web-based forms that would automatically encode each element on their reports. The result: every report would be computer-readable, and the underlying data could be more easily extracted, searched, and analyzed.

Financial and business information in a uniform format will be more transparent, and thus more accessible for public critique. Fraudulent transactions and irresponsible risk-taking can be more easily detected, search costs are reduced, and companies will be put under greater pressure to explain the underpinnings of the financial statements they release. Instead of assigning an immense oversight responsibility to a handful of federal employees, we can now enable the public to act as citizen-regulators. And because information reported to different agencies will become compatible, investors, watchdog groups, and analysts will have powerful new searches at their disposal.

The Government Information Transparency Act also requires a single data standard for federal financial information, to bring the same interactivity and compatibility to the disclosures put out by federal agencies. By making this kind of information more accessible to the general public, we are unleashing the very best government watchdogs—the American people themselves—to expose waste, fraud, and abuse of their tax dollars.

For business and financial information, the sunlight of transparency has always been the best disinfectant. Our Government Information Transparency Act, added to S. 303, will make that sunlight brighter and clearer than ever.

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, in closing, I would just ask all Members to join with Senator VOINOVICH, Chairman TOWNS, and Ranking Member ISSA in support of this resolution, and I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 303, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH RUNAWAY PREVENTION

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 779) recognizing and supporting the goals and ideals of National Runaway Prevention Month, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 779

Whereas the prevalence of runaway and homelessness among youth is staggering, with studies suggesting that every year, between 1,600,000 and 2,800,000 youth live on the streets of the United States;

Whereas running away from home is widespread, and youth aged 12 to 17 are at a higher risk of homelessness than adults;

Whereas runaway youth most often are youth who have been expelled from their homes by their families; physically, sexually, and emotionally abused at home; discharged by State custodial systems without adequate transition plans; separated from their parents by death and divorce; too poor to secure their own basic needs; and ineligible or unable to access adequate medical or mental health resources;

Whereas effective programs supporting runaway youth and assisting youth and their families in remaining at home succeed because of partnerships created among families, community-based human service agencies, law enforcement agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, and businesses;

Whereas preventing youth from running away from home and supporting youth in high-risk situations is a family, community, and national priority;

Whereas the future well-being of the Nation is dependent on the opportunities provided for youth and families to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for youth to develop into safe, healthy, and productive adults;

Whereas the National Network for Youth and its members advocate on behalf of runaway and homeless youth, and provide an array of community-based support to address their critical needs;

Whereas the National Runaway Switchboard provides crisis intervention and referrals to reconnect runaway youth to their families and link youth to local resources that provide positive alternatives to running away from home; and

Whereas the National Network for Youth and National Runaway Switchboard are co-sponsoring National Runaway Prevention Month in November to increase public awareness of the life circumstances of youth in high-risk situations, and the need for safe, healthy, and productive alternatives, resources, and support for youth, families, and communities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—
(1) recognizes the importance of youth runaway prevention; and

(2) urges support for greater public awareness efforts and effective runaway youth prevention programs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and add any extraneous materials.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the House Committee on Oversight and

Government Reform, I am pleased to present House Resolution 779 for consideration. This resolution recognizes the importance of youth runaway prevention and at-risk youth programs. House Resolution 779 was introduced by my friend and colleague, Representative JUDY BIGGERT of Illinois, on September 25, 2009, and was favorably reported out of the Oversight Committee December 10, 2009, by unanimous consent. Notably, this measure enjoys the support of 55 Members of Congress.

Madam Speaker, according to the National Runaway Switchboard, between 1.6 million and 2.8 million young people run away from home every year. As additionally noted by The New York Times in an October 25, 2009, article on this issue of runaway youth, this societal problem is growing. Specifically, The New York Times reported that the number of contacts made by federally financed outreach programs with runaways increased to 761,000 in 2008, and that was up from 550,000 in 2002, the year that the current methods of counting began.

Notably, National Runaway Switchboard reports that among those young people at greatest risk of running away and facing homelessness are those that have been expelled from school, those that have suffered domestic abuse, and those that have been discharged by State custodial systems without the benefit of an adequate transitional planning program. Additionally, young people who have separated from their parents by death or divorce, live in poverty, and/or are unable to access adequate or mental health resources are similarly at risk of running away and becoming homeless. And the National Runaway Switchboard also reports that youth homelessness affects males and females equally, although females are more likely to seek help through shelters and hotlines.

Despite these concerning reports and statistical programs, there are efforts, such as The National Network for Youth and the National Runaway Switchboard, that provide effective support to runaway youth and assist young people and their families in remaining together by developing partnerships with families, community-based agencies, schools, and faith-based organizations.

These two programs offer invaluable services, including advocacy on behalf of the runaway youth and their families, crisis intervention, and various forms of community-based support to address critical needs. In addition, the two programs have worked together to cosponsor National Runaway Prevention Month, which occurs in November, and attempts to increase public awareness of the life circumstances of youth in high-risk situations and the need for safe, healthy, and productive alternatives, resources and support for runaway youth and their families.

Madam Speaker, in light of the prevalence of the problem of runaway youth as well as youth homelessness,